

Catholick Christianity: ²

OR, AN

E S S A Y

TOWARD

LESSENING the NUMBER

OF

CONTROVERSIES

AMONG

CHRISTIANS.

By the Most Rev. Dr. *EDWARD SYNGE*,
late Lord Archbishop of *Tuam* in *Ireland*:

*Thou art careful and troubled about many things: But
one thing is needful, Luke x. 41, 42.*

*Beware lest any man spoil you through Philosophy and
vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the ru-
diments of the world, and not after Christ, Col. ii. 8.*

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T H E
P R E F A C E.



ALMOST all the Controversial Writers in Divinity (or at least of those that I have met with) seem to me to be guilty of one of these two Mistakes; and some of both of them.

First, All that they endeavour to do is to prove the Truth of the Doctrines which they maintain, without clearly and distinctly shewing how far the Belief of them is

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necessary to Salvation: *And, Secondly, Many of them lay more Weight upon the Authority of the Fathers, Councils, and ancient Liturgies, than what, I think, there is sufficient Ground for.*

If God requires the Belief of a Doctrine, as necessary to Salvation; no Man, who is convinced of this, can possibly doubt but that the Doctrine is true. But it is possible that a Doctrine may be true, and yet the Belief of it may not be necessary to Salvation.

Men of Capacity, no doubt, may be allowed to debate even the bare Truth of Doctrines; provided that they do it with Modesty and Humility. But as for the Truth of those Doctrines, the Belief of which is not necessary to Salvation, the
Gene-

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Generality of Mankind are not capable of rightly apprehending and judging of the Arguments that are brought, on the one Side, and the other, when such Doctrines are controverted.

Great Care, therefore, ought always to be taken clearly to distinguish the Things that are necessary to Salvation from those that are not so ; that Men of small Capacity (who yet ought to take Care of their Salvation) may learn whatever is necessary for them ; without amusing themselves with Things that are not necessary, and of which they are not, it may be, able, with the greatest Application, to form a right Judgment.

The Being of God, the Creator of all Things, with the Obligation

that lies upon us, his rational Creatures, to worship and obey him; and also the Truth of the Christian Religion, in the general, may be proved, and often have been proved by such clear and convincing Arguments, as a Man even of a low Capacity may well apprehend: But the Difficulty that lies upon such a Man, is clearly to find out what is necessary for his Salvation; in the midst of all the Disputes and Controversies about this Matter, which are maintained and kept up by the several contending Parties, who, all of them, call themselves by the common Name of Christians.

Nothing is or can be necessary to Salvation, but only what God, who is the Author and Giver of
Salva-

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Salvation, has prescribed to be performed on our Part, as a Condition of it: Into which therefore every Man, who would be saved, is concerned and obliged with all the Care he can, to enquire.

The Divine Authority of all those Books of Holy Scripture, which Protestants call Canonical, may be proved, and often has been proved by very plain Arguments; and the universal Reception of them, among Christians of all Ages and Places, is an undeniable Proof that they give us a true Account of the Christian Religion.

And as for the Apocryphal Books which the Church of Rome receives and owns as Part of the Old Testament; It is a sufficient Reason for our not allowing them to
be

viii P R E F A C E.

be of Divine Authority, that the Jews, unto whom were committed the Oracles of God, Rom. iii. 2. never received or owned them as such; To say nothing now of the other Arguments that are brought against them. Or in case we should allow them to be of Divine Authority, yet it does not appear that they teach any Thing to be necessary to Salvation, different from what is taught in the Canonical Scriptures.

If then all that God requires as necessary to Salvation can plainly be pointed out and shewn from the Canonical Scriptures; it plainly follows, that every sincere Christian must thereby be concluded.

Or

Or if any Man shall undertake to shew that any Thing more is required as necessary to Salvation, beside what the Scripture teaches so to be; and for this Purpose shall urge the Decrees of General Councils, the Writings of the Fathers, or the ancient Liturgies of the Church, as the Conveyers of Tradition to us; Beside the particular Answers that may be, and often have been given to all these Allegations, it is enough to tell him, that before such Proof as this is to be admitted, it must be clearly shewn and made out that these Councils, Fathers, and Liturgies, are of no less than Divine Authority; since none but God himself has Power to prescribe the Terms and Conditions of Salvation. And if the
Holy

Holy Scripture plainly says, This is all that God requires as necessary to Salvation, and yet any Man shall tell me that He requires more than this; is not this to make God contradict Himself?

These Considerations have put me upon framing the following short, but I hope plain Discourse; which at first was delivered as a Sermon, and is now published, in hope that it may be of some Benefit to all such Readers as seriously look beyond this transitory World, and are more desirous to know their Duty, and put it in Practice, than to fill their Heads with subtile Notions.

Catholick



Catholick Christianity:

OR, AN

ESSAY toward Lessening the
Number of CONTROVERSIES
among *CHRISTIANS*.



IT will not be amiss, in the Entrance of this Discourse to lay down some common Principles, in which all *Christians* unanimously agree, and which therefore I need not stand to prove: Altho', if there were Occasion, they may be proved, and indeed often have been proved, by such clear and solid Arguments as are abundantly sufficient fully to convince every sober and impartial Man.

I. All Religion consists in Faith and Obedience. To believe whatever a Man is persuaded that God requires him to believe; And to do or forbear every Thing according as he is persuaded that God requires him to do or forbear it, make up the Sum total of every Man's Religion.

II. The Christian Religion, as it was delivered to the World by *Jesus Christ* and his Apostles, is from God, and has God for its Author.

III. A true Account of the Christian Religion is given in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. The Church of *Rome* indeed will not allow it to be a *full* Account; for which Reason they add what they call *Tradition* to it: But whatever Account is given of *Christ* or his Religion in the Holy Scriptures, they allow it to be *true*: Which is enough for my present Purpose.

IV. However difficult it may be to find out the true Meaning and full Import of divers obscure Passages of Holy Scripture; yet very many Passages of *It* are so plain, as to leave no Room to doubt of the true Sense of them.

These

These four Things being briefly premised; I proceed to what I have proposed.

It is justly complain'd of, by sober Men of all Parties, that a great many very difficult Questions are intermixed with the Doctrines of the Christian Religion: So many, as that it is impossible for any Man to remember them all; and so difficult and intricate as to be beyond the Capacity of much the greater Part of Men even to understand them.

But there is one single Question, to which if a Man knows how to give a clear and full Answer, he will have very little Occasion to trouble himself about any other Question or Controversy in Religion. The Question which I mean is this, *What must a Man do to be sure and certain of eternal Salvation?* If a Man be well and fully informed of every Thing which is necessary for his Salvation, and takes sufficient Care to put it duly in Practice; What possible Occasion can he have for any more Religion, or how indeed can any Thing properly be

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called

called by the Name of *Religion*, that is not *necessary to Salvation*?

Now the various Ways that Christians of different Parties have, of giving an Answer to this most important Question, being still a great Perplexity to the Minds of many well-meaning Men, and the Occasion of many Divisions and Schisms in the Church of *Christ*; the best and indeed the only Way for a Man to arrive at full Satisfaction herein, will be to have Recourse to *Jesus Christ* himself and his Apostles, whose Authority among all Christians is unquestionable; and to learn what is the Answer which they have given to it. And if we plainly find that they have given a full and clear Account of all that is necessary to Salvation, What Man is there, who calls himself a *Christian*, that will dare to make any Alteration in, or Addition to what they have plainly declared and made known touching this Matter?

To come home then to the Point; We find this very Question put to our Blessed Saviour, in these Words,

Matt. xix. 16. What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life? To which our Saviour returns this Answer, y 17. If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. The same Question, with our Saviour's Answer to it, is recorded by St. Mark, ch. x. y 16, 17. And by St. Luke, chap. xviii. y 17, &c. Again, upon another Occasion, a certain Lawyer, to make a Trial of our Blessed Saviour, puts the same Question to him; Master (says he) what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? How readeſt thou? And he answering ſaid, Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul, and with all thy ſtrength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyſelf. And he ſaid unto him, Thou haſt answered right; this do and thou ſhalt live, Luke x. 25, &c.

Thus we have our Bleſſed Saviour's Answer to this great Question. Let us hear alſo what the Apoſtles ſay to it.

Acts ii. 37. The People ſaid unto Peter, and to the reſt of the Apoſtles, Men
B 2 and

and brethren, what shall we do? Their Meaning undoubtedly was to know what they were to do, in order to their Salvation. Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins. Tho' this Answer is expressed in other Words; yet in reality it is the very same that our Saviour (as we have heard) had before given to the like Question; Repentance being nothing but the turning away from Sin, to keep the Commandments of God; and it being one of the Commandments, which God had then given by Jesus Christ, that Men should be baptized in his name, Matt. xxviii. 19.

Acts xvi. 30. We again find this same Question to have been put to St. Paul and his Companion Silas, by the keeper of the prison who had them in Custody: Sirs (said he) what must I do to be saved? To which their Answer was, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house; that is to say, as many of thy House as shall believe. Now that this
 Answer

Answer also is exactly agreeable to those which I have already mentioned will easily appear if we consider, that to *believe on the Lord Jesus Christ* most certainly includes the receiving and owning the Doctrine which he taught; the fundamental Principle of which was, *That to keep the Commandments of God is the only way to Salvation*; and that one of these *Commandments* is, *That we should believe on the name of his son Jesus Christ*; as St. *John* expressly tells us, *1 John iii. 23.*

Altho' these Answers, as I have thus nakedly set them down, may appear to be sufficiently plain to every honest Man who sincerely aims at the Knowledge of his Duty; yet that they may make, if possible, a fuller and clearer Impression upon our Minds, it will not be amiss to add a few other remarkable Passages of Holy Scripture to them, wherein God is pleased to point out the Sum and Substance of all that he requires from Men; and consequently all that is *necessary to our eternal Salvation*:

Deut. x. 12. Moses thus speaks unto the People of God: And now Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?

Let us hear the Conclusion of the whole matter: *Fear God and keep his commandments; For this is the whole duty of man; says Solomon, Eccles. xii. 13.*

The Prophet *Isaiab* having expostulated with the People of *Israel* for their great Wickedness, and in a particular Manner for their Hypocrisy in performing the outward ceremonial part of Religion, when at the same time they were most corrupt and immoral in their Lives; at last comes to shew them what they must do, in order to a full Reconciliation with Almighty God, whom they had most grievously offended. *Wash ye* (says God by the Mouth of that Prophet) *make you clean,*

clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. After which it follows, Tho' your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; tho' they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool, Isaiah i. 16, &c.

The Prophet Micah put this Question of a Man who appears desirous to please God: *Wherewithal shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God?* &c. To which he gives this Answer; *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* Micah vi. 6, &c. God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him, says St. Peter, Acts x. 34, 35.

The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all Men; teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; Looking
for

for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ; says St. Paul, Tit. ii. 11, &c.

Many other like Passages of Holy Scripture might be added, if, in so plain a Case, it were necessary; but the main Tenor and Drift both of the Old and New Testament, being manifestly all to this very purpose, makes it altogether needless. And therefore from the whole I may upon very sure Grounds lay down this Conclusion, in answer to the Question proposed;

That To believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to keep the Commandments of God, is the sure and only way to eternal Salvation.

The Necessity of believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, in order to Salvation, is most expressly declared in the Holy Scriptures. Thus our Saviour himself says, *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life, &c. John iii. 16, 17, 18, 19. And again, v. 36. He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting*

lasting life: And he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

Again; *This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent, John xvii. 3. Neither is there salvation in any other: For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved, as St. Peter tells us, Acts iv. 12. To which many more Texts might be added, but that they are already sufficiently known to every one who is a little acquainted with the New Testament.*

And that it is in like manner necessary that we *keep the Commandments of God*, is so expressly declared in the Passages which I have already quoted, with many others that might be added, and so universally acknowledged by all Christians, that I need say no more for the Proof it.

Before I proceed farther in what I design, there is one Difficulty, with which many seem to be puzzled, for the removing of which it will not be improper to say something.

“ If

“ If (say they) explicitly to be-
 “ lieve in *Jesus Christ*, and to keep the
 “ Commandments of God, be thus
 “ absolutely necessary to eternal Sal-
 “ vation; what shall become of those
 “ who, all their Life long, have been,
 “ are, or shall be kept in invincible
 “ Ignorance of all, or almost all these
 “ Things? It is impossible for a Man
 “ to believe in *Christ*, if he has never
 “ heard of him, or of the Grounds or
 “ Reasons upon which our Belief in
 “ him is to be founded. It is also
 “ impossible for him to keep the
 “ Commandments of God, if he does
 “ not so much as know what these
 “ Commandments are. And yet that
 “ Millions and Millions of People, in
 “ all Ages of the World, have lived
 “ and died not only in the utter Ig-
 “ norance of all these Things, but
 “ without any way or means of com-
 “ ing to the Knowledge of them,
 “ is beyond Dispute: And that Mil-
 “ lions and Millions more are likely
 “ to continue to do the same, may
 “ well be concluded from the present
 “ State of Mankind upon the Face of
 “ the

“ the Earth. Must all these poor
 “ Souls then be eternally damned for
 “ not believing and doing what, for
 “ want of Knowledge and even the
 “ Means of it, was absolutely impos-
 “ sible for them to believe or do?”
Shall not the judge of all the earth do
right? Gen. xviii. 25.

To all which it is very sufficient to
 answer, in the Words of *Moses*, That
secret things belong unto the Lord our
God: but those things which are revealed
belong to us and to our children for ever,
Deut. xxix. 29.

Both Reason and Holy Scripture
 give us abundant Assurance that God
 is infinitely just and good; and there-
 fore that he will neither deal unjustly
 nor cruelly with any Man. If a Man
 has sufficient Knowledge, and will not
 act according to it; or if he has the
 Means of Knowledge in his Power,
 and will not make use of them, he
 justly deserves to be punished; and
 whatever Punishment he undergoes
 for his Obstinacy or gross Neglect, he
 brings it on himself; and therefore
 has none but himself to blame for it.
 And

And yet what Allowance God will make, even in some of these Cases, for the Weakness and Frailty of Man, where the Temptations are very strong or sudden, is more than we know: Only in general Terms, he has told us, *that like as a father pitieth his children; so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame, he remembreth that we are dust,* Psal. ciii. 13, 14. Which goodness of God, instead of making us presumptuous, *ought to lead us to repentance,* Rom. ii. 4. But how he will deal with those who are invincibly (and therefore inculpably) ignorant, is a *Secret*, which he has reserved to himself; for which Reason it would be a vain Presumption in us to enquire into it. There is scarce any Man, even among the Heathens, so ignorant or stupid, as not to carry some Light of Religion in his own Reason and Conscience. How far this Light *shews the work of the law written in his heart* (as the Apostle expresses it, Rom. ii. 15.) can be known only to God, who is the *searcher of hearts*; nor has God, upon this Occasion,

sion, made any thing more known to us, but only that *as many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law*, Rom. ii. 12. God will not judge any Man by a Law which he never knew, nor had any Way to come to the Knowledge of: But such Men shall be judged by their own Consciences; nor is it to be doubted but that God will pass a righteous Sentence on them; but what that Sentence will be, either in the general, with respect to them all, or in particular with respect to any one Man, is never to be known to any but God, until the great Day of the Lord shall discover it.

When St. *Peter*, like other Men, was desirous to have his Curiosity gratified; and in order thereunto, put a Question to our Blessed Saviour, to know what should befall the Apostle St. *John*; our Saviour, instead of complying with such a fruitless Request, gives him a gentle Rebuke, *What is that to thee?* (says he) *follow thou me*, John xxi. 22. In like manner, if a

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Man

Man shall be inquisitive to know in what State the ancient Patriarchs and others are, who had but an imperfect Knowledge of *Christ*, before his Coming into the World; nor what is or shall become of the Heathens, or others who never had, or are like to have any Knowledge at all of *Christ*, and but very little or none of God's Commandments; the like Answer may be given to him: "What is all this to thee? Or how art thou concerned in it? Follow thou *Christ*; be thankful for the Means of Salvation which he hath afforded thee, and make the right Use of them; but do not pretend to intermeddle with Matters which belong unto God alone, and wherein thou hast nothing to do."

Setting therefore this Question intirely aside, as altogether useless and impertinent to us; there are two other Things which are here necessary to be inquired into, in order to our better understanding the Way of Salvation.

First,

First, What are the particular Things comprehended under this general Expression of *believing in the Lord Jesus Christ*? Or in other Words, What are the several Particulars which the Holy Scripture proposes to be believed concerning *Christ*, in order to our being saved through him?

Secondly, What are those Commandments of God, which for the same Purpose, we are obliged to keep?

First then, What are the several Particulars which the Holy Scripture proposes to be believed concerning *Christ*, in order to our being saved through him?

And here I may well lay down this as a fundamental Rule, *That whatever God has made known concerning Jesus Christ, we are bound to believe the same, as far as we can by our reasonable Diligence attain to the Knowledge of it.* It is very possible indeed that one Man may have much more Knowledge of these Things than another (for want either of Capacity or due Information) is able to arrive to. But that every Man is bound to make an honest

nest and sincere Enquiry into what God has made known concerning them, and to believe whatever he finds that God has made known, is what I am sure no Christian will deny, and therefore I need not offer any Proof for it.

In the first Place then, The chief and principal Thing that God has made known to us of *Jesus Christ*, and which for that Reason we are bound to believe, is that *He is the Son of God*. I call this the *chief and principal thing* to be believed of him, because I find it so to be represented in the Holy Scripture. Thus when our Saviour put this Question to his Apostles, *Whom say ye that I am?* *Simon Peter answered, and said, Thou art Christ, the son of the living God.* And *Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou Simon Bar-jona: For flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven,* Matth. xvi. 15, 16, 17. And the like Profession of Faith *St. Peter* makes upon another Occasion: *Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the son of the living God,* John vi. 68, 69. John

John xi. 25. Our Blessed Saviour says of himself unto *Martha*, *I am the resurrection and the life: He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die. Believest thou this? She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the son of God, which should come into the world.*

When the *Eunuch*, upon the Instruction which he had received from *Philip*, expressed a Desire to be baptized; *Philip* said, *If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest.* And he answered and said, *I believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God.* Upon which Profession of his Faith, *Philip* immediately baptized him, and thereby received him as a Member of the Church of *Christ*, as we read, *Acts viii. 36, 37, 38.*

When *St. Paul* had been miraculously converted to the Christian Faith; and from a Persecutor of the Gospel, was, by *Christ* himself, made an Apostle and Preacher of it; this was the principal and fundamental Doctrine

trine which he every where taught; as we are expressly told, *Acts ix. 20. Straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the son of God.*

Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God, says St. John, 1 John iv. 15. And again, Who is he that overcometh the World, but he that believeth that Jesus is the son of God? chap. v. v. 5.

More than this needs not, I think, be said to any one who acknowledges the Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures, to make it appear to him, that the chief and principal Thing to be believed of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, is, that *He is the Son of God*: But here there arises a Difficulty, which at first was started by such Men as were for measuring all Things by their own Understanding; but, in Process of Time, has not a little perplexed others also; and therefore ought to have a fair Answer given to it; which I shall endeavour to do, without intermeddling with such Cavils as *minister questions, rather than godly edifying, which is in faith*; To which sort of Things
the

the Apostle directs us *not to give heed*,
1 Tim. i. 4.

The Way of fairly proposing a Difficulty is, First to grant all that is plainly to be granted, and then to shew what more remains that yet wants to be cleared up. After which Manner, if a Man of Candour and Ingenuity proposes the Difficulty which I have told you here arises, he must thus proceed:

First, He must grant that *Jesus Christ* most certainly is *the Son of God*; because He is often, in a very remarkable Manner declared in Holy Scripture so to be, as I have already shewn you. What remains therefore here to be explained, is only what is the true *Meaning* of this Expression.

Secondly, He must grant that such great and glorious Things are spoken of him, as cannot possibly agree to any meer Man, nor indeed to any one but God. The Passages of Holy Scripture to this purpose are many and very well known: I shall only mention two or three of them.

John i. 1. We thus read: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God; and the Word was God: The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made, that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men, &c.* Why this Term, *Word* (or *Logos*, as it is in the Original Greek) is made use of, we need not here enquire. But that all this is spoken of our Saviour *Jesus Christ*, is allowed on all hands, and most manifestly appears from *Y 14.* Where *St. John*, continuing his Discourse, says, *The Word was made Flesh and dwelt among us, And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*

Col. ii. 3. The Apostle, speaking of *Christ*, says, that in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge: And *Y 9.* he says, that in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; which is such a Conjunction of the Divine and Human Nature in him, as never was in any other Man. It was a peculiar Privilege which God vouchsafed

safed unto his chosen *Servant Moses*, that whereas he made himself known unto *other prophets in visions or dreams*; with faithful *Moses* he spoke mouth to mouth, Numb. xii. 6, 7, 8. face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend, Exod. xxxiii. 11. But infinitely beyond all this, In *Jesus Christ* He has taken up His very Habitation; In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (that is to say, substantially) says *St. Paul*.

Heb. i. 2. The Apostle tells us, that God hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things; by whom also he made the worlds. Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high: Being made so much better than the Angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the Angels said he, at any time, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?* And again, *I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?* And again, *When*
be

he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let the Angels of God worship him. And of the Angels he saith, Who maketh his Angels spirits, and his Ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever, a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom, &c.

Many other pregnant Passages of Holy Scripture might to the same Purpose be added; but they are so well known, that I need not now mention them: Those which I have already acknowledged being very sufficient to prove what I have said, it must in the *Second Place* be granted, and indeed is generally allowed by all Christians, that such great and glorious Things are spoken of *Christ*, as cannot possibly agree to any meer Man, no, nor to any Angel, or Creature, how excellent soever, but only to God.

Thirdly, It is also granted that *Jesus Christ* is the *Son of God*, not barely in the same manner as good Men, and the blessed Angels are sometimes also called *the Sons of God*; but in a Manner peculiar to himself, and altogether different.

different from that wherein any other Person has this Appellation given to him. But the Stress of the Difficulty lies here, that we have no Conception of the *Manner* how God, who is an eternal, infinite, and immortal Spirit, could beget a Son; and how is it then possible for us to believe a Thing of which we neither have, nor indeed are capable of having any Conception or Notion?

To this it will be easy to give a satisfactory Answer, by considering that there are many Things which we believe and are fully persuaded and convinced of, although we are altogether ignorant of the *Manner* how they are, or came to be, such as we fully believe them to be.

Every Man is by his own Experience fully convinced that his Soul is united to his Body: But how and in what *Manner* it is thus united, so as to give Life, Sensation, and Motion unto the Body, which without the Soul would be but a dead Carcass, no Man is able to give an Account.

Every

Every Man, who considers, must of Necessity be convinced that there is and must be an eternal first Cause of all Things which never had nor could have a Beginning or Being. For if there had been but one single Instant, in which nothing at all did exist, it would be absolutely impossible that any Thing should ever have existed, or been produced. And yet how, or after what *Manner*, it is possible that any Thing should be, or exist, without any Beginning of its Being, is altogether beyond the Reach of our finite Understanding.

Every Man, who has any Religion, believes that God is present in all the Parts of the Universe, so as every where to know all Things, and to be able to do whatever is possible to be done. But how, and in what *Manner*, he is thus Omnipresent, Omniscient, and Omnipotent, the greatest Philosopher is not able to conceive.

To give but one Instance more, and that a very familiar one: A Man born blind, who never had the least Glimmering of Light; by the Conversation

tion which he has with other Men, is fully convinced that there is such a Sense as *Sight*, whereby Men discover and distinguish Things one from another at a Distance. But how, and after what *Manner*, it is that Men *see*, and thus distinguish Objects, he neither has nor can have the least Apprehension or Notion.

Let us now apply these few Instances to the Matter in hand. We have the infallible Testimony of the Holy Scripture that *Jesus Christ is the Son, the begotten, the only begotten Son of God*. John i. 14, 18. The only Difficulty, in believing this, arises from hence, that we are not able to conceive the *Manner* how God, who is an eternal, infinite, and immortal Spirit, could beget a Son. But if this be a good Reason for not believing *Jesus Christ* to be the Son of God; by the same Rule we must not believe that our own Souls are united to our Bodies: We must not believe that God is Eternal, Omnipresent, Omniscient, or Omnipotent; because our weak Understanding is not able to form a

D Notion

Notion of the *Manner* how these Things are so: And a blind Man, notwithstanding all that his Neighbours say to him, must never believe that there is any such Thing as Sight, Light, or Colours; because it is impossible for him, without the proper Faculty, to conceive any Notion of them. Indeed, at this Rate, we must not believe that any Cause produces any Effect; because the wisest of Men are not able to give a clear Account of the *Manner* how Causes operate. So that at last we must come to believe nothing at all.

God requires no Impossibility from us; and therefore does not expect that we should believe more of any Thing, than what He hath given us both the Capacity and Means of informing ourselves, and coming to the Knowledge of: But to refuse to believe any Thing that He has so expressly declared in his holy Word, only because we do not understand the *Manner* how it is, or comes to be, is plainly to set our own weak and dim-sighted Wisdom upon

upon a Level with his Divine Omniscience.

We know the Things of God but in part; we prophesy of them but in part; we see them through a glass darkly, or in a riddle (as it is in the Original, and Margin of our Bibles) 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 12. We walk by faith not by sight, 2 Cor. v. 7. And faith is the evidence of things not seen, Heb. xi. 1. He therefore who believes all those great and glorious Things, that God has in his holy Word most plainly declared of Jesus Christ, and particularly that He is the only begotten Son of God; and in Consequence of this Belief, honoureth the Son, as he honoureth the Father, as our Saviour expressly tells us we are to do, John v. 23. his Faith, in this Point, is very sufficient, because he believes all of it that God has thought fit to make known to us: And as for the Manner how these Things are or come so to be, which God has not thought fit to reveal; he must be content to be ignorant of it, until he comes to see God face to face, 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

And thus I have given such an Account, as the Holy Scripture gives of the chief and principal Thing which God has made known to be believed by us of *Jesus Christ*; which is, that *He is the Son of God* in a Manner peculiar to himself, although to us unknown.

Other Things there are which God has made known unto us of *Jesus Christ*, which therefore we ought to enquire into and believe, it being our Duty to *grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, 2 Pet. iii. 18. and not only to *add to our faith virtue*, but also to *our virtue knowledge*, chap. i. 5.

The Things, which I here point at, are so very plainly set forth in Scripture, that *he who runs may read them* (as the Prophet speaks, *Hab. ii. 2*) and therefore I need only to mention them; because they are generally known and believed by all Christians.

Thus then we are most plainly taught in Holy Scripture; and it is accordingly acknowledged and believed by those who receive and profess

feſs the *Gospel of Chriſt*; That is to ſay;

That the Son of God became Man, and took our Nature upon him;

That, by the powerful Operation of the Holy Ghoſt, He was conceived in the Womb of a pure Virgin, and born of her;

That he was of the Lineage of holy *Abraham* and *David*;

That he led a moſt pure and holy Life, without the leaſt Spot or Stain of Sin;

That He was the *Chriſt*, or *Meſſiah*, whom God had long before promiſed to ſend into the World for great and glorious Purpoſes;

That all the Doctrine, which he taught, was from God, and therefore undoubtedly true;

That all the Commands and Precepts, which he gave out, were alſo from God, and therefore to be obeyed;

That for the Confirmation of the Truth of his Doctrine, and the Authority of his Precepts, he wrought

many Miracles, which could not have been performed but by the extraordinary Power of God;

That he was unjustly crucified and put to Death, his Soul being separated from his Body;

That his Body was buried, and continued in the State of Death until the third Day;

That upon the third Day he rose again to Life; Of which his Apostles and Disciples were faithful Witnesses;

That at the End of forty Days, he was visibly taken up into Heaven;

That he sits at the Right Hand of the Majesty of God, and has all Power in Heaven and Earth;

That before his Death, he ordained and commanded that all, who should believe on him, should eat of that Bread, and drink of that Cup, which he appointed, in Remembrance of his Death and Passion;

That, before his Ascension, he gave Power and Commandment to his Apostles to teach his Doctrine and publish his Precepts unto all Nations, and to receive all that should believe on him

him into his Church by Baptism, *in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* For which Reason his Church is truly *Catholick*, or *Universal*; because all Nations of the World are equally admitted into it;

That, in the Communion of his holy Church, Forgiveness of Sins is most certainly to be had, upon the Conditions of Faith and Repentance: His Death and Passion being a Sacrifice and Propitiation for the Sins of the World; and he being not only our Lord, but also our High Priest, and the one Mediator between God and us;

That, to enable his Apostles and Disciples to publish those glad Tidings to the World, and bring Men over to the Belief of them, he sent the Holy Ghost, the blessed Spirit of God, who is one with the Father and the Son, to inspire and endow them with perfect Knowledge, and every other Gift that was necessary for this Purpose, and to assist every faithful Christian in the way of Salvation to the End of the World;

And,

And, *Lastly*, That he is appointed to be the Judge of all Men; before whose Judgment-seat we must every one of us stand at the last great Day, to receive Sentence, either for eternal Happiness or everlasting Punishment, according as we have performed or neglected our Duty. In order to which Judgment, the Bodies of all, who then shall have died, will be raised up and re-united to their Souls, and a Change will be made in all those who then shall be found alive.

These are the particular Things comprehended under this general Expression of *believing in the Lord Jesus Christ*, in order to our Salvation; and they are all of them so plainly taught in the Holy Scriptures, and so unanimously believed in all Christian Churches, that 'tis hard to conceive how any Man can be ignorant of them or any of them, except it be for want of Enquiry or Attention: Or if any Man, through the Want of Capacity or Instruction, is not sufficiently informed about them; he must be left to answer for himself at the great
Judg-

Judgment-Day. But if any Man shall refuse to believe them or any of them, because he is not able to find out the particular *Manner* how they are or can be; the same Answer must be given to him as I have already given to those who, for the same Reason, entertain some Doubt about *Jesus Christ's* being *the begotten Son of God*. Surely God's Knowledge is infinitely greater than ours; and if He has plainly declared a Thing so to be, what a Presumption is it in us, poor Mortals, to refuse to believe it, because we are not able to understand the *Manner* of it?

There are many other particular Circumstances relating to the Birth, Life, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of our blessed Saviour, and many other Things said and taught by Him and his Apostles, which are very plainly set forth in Holy Scripture, and very profitable to be known, as far as a Man is capable of coming to the Knowledge of them; of which yet if a Man happens to be ignorant, his Salvation will not be thereby

by affected, except his Ignorance proceeds from his own gross Neglect or Carelessness: But in the several Things which I have now recounted, the Glory of God, and the Salvation of us all are nearly concerned; for which Reason they ought to be known and believed by every Christian, and diligently taught and inculcated by all such as have the Care of Souls committed to them.

And thus I have shewn what are the several Particulars which we are bound to believe concerning *Christ*, in order to our being saved through Him; which was the first Question proposed.

The other Question, which remains to be answered, is this; *What are the several Commandments of God, which, for the same Purpose, we are obliged to keep?* To which, in a Thing so very well known, a short Answer, provided it be plain, will, I think, be sufficient.

All the Commandments, which God has given unto Men, have been, and must of Necessity always be, either,
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First, *Moral*; or Secondly, *Positive Commandments*; as we usually distinguish them.

By *Moral Commandments* we mean all such as require Things that are good in themselves, and in their Nature; the Goodness of which every sober Man's Reason is sufficient to convince him of. Thus the Commandments which God has given, both in the Old and New Testament, that we should love, fear, serve, and worship him, and not give religious Worship to any other; that we should love our Neighbours as ourselves, and do unto all Men as we would they should do unto us; and that we should be sober, chaste, and temperate, and carefully abstain from every Action and Desire that is any way contrary to whatever God has thus enjoined: All this sort of Commandments (I say) we call *Moral Commandments*; because the Goodness of them is most manifest to every one who will but soberly think of them. And that all these *Moral Commandments* are of perpetual Obligation to all Christians,

Itians, and indeed to all Men that were, are, or ever shall be, is so manifestly declared throughout the Holy Scriptures, and so universally acknowledged by all Parties, that I need not here offer any Thing for the Proof of it.

Beside such Things as these, which are naturally and eternally good, and to every Man's sober Reason appear so to be, God was formerly pleased to command other Things also, which had no other Goodness in them, but only that God had commanded them; and such Commandments as these we call *Positive Commandments* or *Institutions*. Thus he commanded our first Parents that they should not eat of the Fruit of one particular Tree in the Garden of *Eden*. Thus when he had given full Liberty to Mankind to eat the Flesh of every other living Creature, for their Sustenance; yet he commanded them not to eat the *Blood* of any such Creature, *Gen. ix. 4.* Which Command we find several times repeated in the Law of *Moses*: Thus he commanded *Abraham* that every Male

Male or Man-child of his Family and all his Posterity should be *circumcised*, Gen. xvii. 10. Thus he gave several Commands unto the People of *Israel*, concerning Sacrifices, Oblations, Purifications, and the Observation of certain Days or Times : And (to omit all other particular Instances) although it is a *Moral Duty*, that some proper Time should be set apart for the publick Worship and Service of God ; yet that this should be the *seventh* Day of the Week, rather than the first, or second, or any other Day of it, was only a *positive Commandment*.

Now that all these *positive Commandments* contained in the Old Law, and among them that of the *seventh-day-Sabbath*, as far as it is a *positive Command*, were by the Gospel of *Christ* utterly abrogated and laid aside, and that no Part of that Law was to be retained but what is purely *moral*, is so very plain, both from the whole Design of the New Testament, and many well known particular Passages in it, and so universally believed by

all Christians, that I need not stand now to give any more particular Proof of it.

But although all the old *positive Commands*, which God formerly gave to his chosen People, are abolished and done away by *Jesus Christ*, yet there were four *positive Commands*, which he thought fit to leave with his Apostles, for ever to be observed in his Church to the End of the World.

First, That all Persons, who are received into his Church, should be *baptized in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*, Matt. xxviii. 19.

Secondly, That all, who profess the Christian Faith, should often *eat of that Bread, and drink of that Cup*, which he appointed to be eaten and drunk in remembrance of him, and to shew forth his Death until he come. Matt. xxvi. 26, &c. 1 Cor. xi. 23, &c.

Thirdly, That the *First Day* in every Week (being the Day on which he arose from the Dead) should in a parti-

particular Manner be set apart for the Service of God, and the holy Assemblies for his Worship: Which has all along been done in the Christian Church from the very Time of his Resurrection, *John* xx. 26. *Acts* xx. 7. *1 Cor.* xvi. 2. For which Reason the Day has all along been called *the Lord's Day*, *Rev.* i. 10. as being particularly appointed by him.

Fourthly, That (to avoid Confusion, *1 Cor.* xiv. 23.) every Man should not be at Liberty to take upon himself the Performance of Holy Offices in the Church; but that there should every where be settled Pastors and Teachers, whose proper Business it should be to instruct the People, and so to regulate all the Circumstances of religious Performances among them, as that *all things be done to edifying*, *1 Cor.* xiv. 26. and *decently and in order*, *1 Cor.* xiv. 40. For this Purpose our Saviour sent his Apostles, *John* xx. 21. as *Labourers in God's Harvest*, *Matt.* ix. 38. And they, by virtue of the Authority which they had received from him, wherever

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they planted the Gospel, not only regulated all these Things themselves, as we find St. *Paul* expressly to have done, 1 Cor. xiv. but also appointed others to do the same; and for this Purpose ordained *Elders in every Church*, Acts xiv. 23. Tit. i. 5. giving Commandment to the People to *obey them who had the Rule over them*, and watched for their souls, Heb. xiii. 17. and requiring that such Teachers should always be continued in the Church. *The things that thou hast heard from me, among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also*, says St. *Paul* to Timothy, 2 Tim. ii. 2. Although none of these Teachers or Rulers were to be lords over God's heritage, 1 Pet. v. 3. or to have dominion over the faith of Christians, 2 Cor. i. 24. but only to feed the flock of God, and take the oversight thereof, 1 Pet. v. 2.

And thus I have given a plain and full, though brief, Account of the Answer which our blessed Saviour and his Apostles have made to this important

important, and only necessary Question in Religion, *What must we do to be saved?* which is, that *to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and to keep the commandments of God, is the sure and only way to eternal salvation.* I have also shewn you what the particular Things are which we are to believe concerning *Christ*, and what the Commandments of God are which we are to keep. All the *moral Commandments* of God are of perpetual Obligation: The *positive Commandments*, which he thought fit to give to his People before the Coming of *Christ*, are all abolished: and there are four, and but four *positive Commandments* given by him to the Christian Church.

If any Man shall here ask, what we are then to think of that Multitude of Doctrines, both speculative and practical, which by many have been mixed and blended with Religion; and about which learned Men have so long and earnestly disputed, and writ so many Volumes, that they are not to be numbered, and much less

to be read ; I shall give him a very short but plain Answer.

First, If any Doctrine appears to be false, and manifestly contrary to plain Reason, or Holy Scripture, or both, it is, without any more ado, to be rejected.

Secondly, If any Doctrine be intricate and perplexed, and *ministers questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith*, St. Paul has directed us *not to give heed to such Things*, 1 Tim. i. 4.

Thirdly, If any Doctrine be useful and profitable, although not strictly necessary to Salvation ; there is no Doubt to be made, but that it may be soberly debated by those who are of Capacity for it : Provided always that it be done with Modesty, Humility, and Charity ; and without assuming any *dominion over the faith of Christians*, 2 Cor. i. 24.

Fourthly, No Doctrine is to be imposed either to be believed or put in Practice, *as necessary to Salvation*, besides what has been taught as such by
Jesus

Jesus Christ or his Apostles. This is a Point of great Importance ; and therefore I shall a little enlarge upon it.

When God had given his Law unto the People of *Israel*, he laid a strict Injunction upon them that they *should not add to the word which he commanded them, neither should they diminish ought from it*, Deut. iv. 2. and xii. 32. *Solomon* also gives them such another Charge, *Prov.* xxx. 6. *Add thou not* (says he) *unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar*. It was not hereby forbidden to those in Authority, to make human Laws for the prudent Regulation and Conduct of Affairs both in Church and State ; but only that they should not take upon them to make any Alteration in *God's Law*, either by adding any Thing to it, or diminishing any Thing from it ; but that whatever should be established by any *Human Law*, should no farther be required, than as by *Human Authority* ; and not imposed upon the People, as if God himself had im-
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mediately commanded it. And if no such Addition to, or Alteration in the Law of God given by *Moses*, was allowed to be made by any Man or Men whatsoever; I think that by Parity of Reason, the same Care ought strictly to be taken with regard to the Gospel of *Jesus Christ*. But there is something farther yet to be said touching this Matter.

The Apostles of *Christ*, who were sent and commissioned by him to preach the Gospel; the Apostles (I say) *were faithful stewards of the mysteries of God*, 1 Cor. iv. 1, 2. *Good stewards of the manifold grace of God*, 1 Pet. iv. 10. *They kept back nothing that was profitable*, Acts xx. 20. But wherever they planted a Church, they *declared unto them all the counsel of God*, *Y* 27. That is to say, they fully taught them every Thing that was necessary, or even *profitable* to their Salvation.

But some false Teachers and Preachers there were, who soon began to make Alterations, of their own devising,

vising, in the Gospel. Particularly, there were some that taught, that *except Men were circumcised after the manner of Moses, and kept the Law, they could not be saved*, Acts xv. 1, 24. This Doctrine had made a great Progress in the Church of *Galatia*. The Preachers of it had no Design of utterly abolishing, or wholly setting aside the Gospel of *Christ*: But they endeavoured to add something to it, *as necessary to Salvation*, which *Christ* or his Apostles, had never taught so to be. And yet the Apostle St. Paul calls this *another Gospel*. I marvel (says he) *that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ, unto another Gospel: Which is not* (indeed properly speaking) *another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ*. By *another Gospel* then, it is plain, he means no more but the adding any Thing to the Gospel, *as necessary to Salvation*, which had not been taught so to be either by *Christ* or his Apostles; and to put a Stop to this
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and all the like Practices and Attempts, he adds these most remarkable Words: *But though we, or an Angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let them be accursed.* And that his Words may make the deeper Impression, he repeats the same Thing again, *As we said before, so say I now again, If any Man preach another gospel unto you, than than ye have received, let him be accursed.* As you may read the Whole, Gal. i. 6.

Tho' then, for the present, we should suppose that the Authority of Tradition and all the General Councils, and others, that ever were in the World, and of all the Fathers and ancient Liturgies that ever were in the Church, and of all the learned Men that are or ever were upon the Face of the Earth, and the Authority even of an Angel from Heaven, could be brought to prove any one Thing to be necessary to Salvation, which neither Christ nor his Apostles ever taught so to be; we ought to have no manner of Regard to it all.

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As *St. Paul* did, so do I repeat the same Thing again; *Though for the present, &c.*

The Terms and Conditions of our Salvation are fixed by God, and have faithfully and fully been made known by *Christ* and his Apostles; nor have all the Men that are or ever were, no nor all the *Angels in Heaven*, any Authority given to them, or any of them, to make any Alteration in, or Addition to them: And whoever attempts so to do, let him well consider how he shall escape that dreadful *Curse* which *St. Paul*, in these Words of his, that I have but now quoted, denounces against him.

Let us hear the Conclusion of the whole Matter: *Fear God and keep his Commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into Judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. Eccles. xii. 13, 14.*

I will only add one remarkable Passage of *St. Paul*, which I wish were deeply imprinted upon the Heart of

every Christian : *Flee also youthful lusts, but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace with them that call on the Lord, out of a pure heart. But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes, 2 Tim. ii. 22, 23.*

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